i'm always going to be right here (no one's going anywhere)
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i’m always going to be right here (no one’s going anywhere)

by angelica_barnes

Summary

the world is an unsympathetic, cruel, disastrous place.

but they'll be okay.

(or,

don't worry i fixed everything :) i promise)

Notes

title from "How to disappear" by Lana Del Rey
lyrics from "Queen Of The Night" by Hey Violet

please enjoy my messy gay (well, bi) brain :) :) :) :) :) :) :)

See the end of the work for more notes

I've bandaged your bruises

you've held back my hair

It starts with Charlie's tongue in his mouth.

Knox knows well enough where this kind of thing leads. He's seen Charlie kiss girl after girl, even a few boys, and he knows how he kisses. His fingers are always cold against Knox's neck. Knox tangles his own in Charlie's hair. Absentmindedly Knox wonders how long Charlie's been wanting to kiss him.

There's alcohol on Charlie's breath. Knox can smell vodka and whiskey. A little red wine too, probably from beneath Neil's bed. Ever since he died, Todd's been drinking nightly. They worry about him.

"Charlie, Charlie," Knox gasps, like a gospel. Pinning him against the wall, Knox's wrists in his hands, Charlie smirks. His eyes are cloudy, but Knox pretends he doesn't notice.

"Yes, Knoxious?" Charlie asks, and Knox shakes his head, leaning forward to kiss Charlie's bitten-red lips once more.

"Nothing," he lies, pulling away. "Kiss me again."

who'd've known when this started

that we'd end up here, here?

Knox wakes to Charlie's hazel eyes, wide open and staring into his. Charlie's smiling, his fingers dancing across Knox's cheek and flicking his bangs off his forehead. Knox is, suddenly and unexplainably, breathless.

“Somebody called,” Charlie whispers. Knox risks moving, reaching down under the covers for Charlie’s hand, threading their fingers together. Charlie’s hand is cold.

“Who?” He asks, not really caring, and Charlie smirks, as if he knows.

“Chris, I think,” he murmurs. “Probably to ask about that dinner date you two were supposed to have last night.”

Knox hums, closing his eyes again.

“You think? Didn’t you ask?”

Charlie shrugs, smiling wider. His lips touch Knox’s jaw and Knox feels his heart burst into flames.

“Didn’t answer.”

but you reach out and touch me

say my name like a prayer

Todd won’t get out of bed. Neil’s bed. He’s been stuck there since Monday.

It’s Friday now.

“C’mon, Todd,” Charlie coaxes, Knox leaning against the doorway and watching. “C’mon, we gotta get to class. You can’t miss any more.”

Todd doesn’t move. Knox wonders fleetingly if he himself would be like this if Charlie died, then shakes the unwelcome thought from his head. He’s already lost a friend; he doesn’t need to think about losing whatever Charlie is too.

“C’mon,” Charlie says again, his voice softer this time. Gentler. “C’mon, Todd. C’mon.”

Todd shakes his head. Even from the doorway, Knox can see how his eyes glisten.

“Todd,” Charlie whispers, voice breaking. Knox looks away as Todd starts trembling, sitting up and burying his face in Charlie’s neck.

Charlie immediately wraps his arms around their friend, cradling Todd's head. He's too muscly, Knox knows. Todd needs someone skinny and flat, with warm hands and twinkling eyes. Charlie isn't any of those things.

Knox sighs as Neil's name first slips past Todd's lips. He turns and goes to wake Meeks and Pitts, knowing none of them will be going to class today.

all my friends say you're dangerous

but I don't fucking care

Cameron's left. None of them are quite sure where he went - he may've transferred, or died, or whatever. Truth be told, they don't care all that much.

Chris picks them up at eight. It's dark out, snow falling and blurring their vision. Out of the corner of his eye, Knox sees Todd's cheeks turn wet with tears, and he sees Charlie take Todd's hand.

On his other side, Knox reaches for Charlie's sleeve, tugging. With a nod, Charlie ducks into the backseat after Todd, who curls in on himself and stares out the window, hand limp in Charlie's. Knox settles next to Charlie, keeping his hand wrapped around Charlie's sleeve. In the front seat, Meeks gets comfortable on Pitts' lap, tucking his face into his neck, and Chris presses down on the gas pedal, rocking them forward.

It's after curfew, and with a humorless chuckle, Knox thinks of what Cameron would say. As if it matters now.

cause there's something about it that brings me to life

I know all the consequences, I don't mind

The cafe's too loud. Knox doesn't know how they're supposed to hear each other over all this racket, but then again maybe they're not. Maybe the whole point is just to look at each other.

Mr. Keating is quiet. His hand hasn't left Todd's back since they got here, and Todd's eyes haven't left his lap. Knox isn't sure why they even arrange these meetings, since all they do is sit and stare at one another, pretending things haven't changed irreversibly.

Charlie's got his hand halfway up Knox's thigh. Chris is waiting for them in the car, probably wondering what they've been doing in here for two hours. Knox himself is wondering why they ever have to leave.

this holy redemption tears us in two

but I can't turn my back to you

Sometimes Knox wishes they were all expelled when Neil happened. They may as well have been, the way they're going - they haven't been to class in two weeks. They're so behind they've stopped trying to catch up, even Meeks.

Currently, Meeks is asleep over his math homework (due last Thursday), Pitts' hand held white in his drowsy grip. They're all silent, Todd finally snoring quietly for the first time in three days, and Charlie's flipping through Todd's journal for new warning signs, Knox tucked under his arm, head on his chest.

Under today's date is a poem. It's titled "Neil", like all the others. The thought sometimes crosses Knox's mind that maybe they could've had a happy ending if Todd had just left his damn notebook where Neil could find it.

"Neil" (#76)

in the snow i traced your name

and wished upon a star

under burning bridges i waited

as the sun fell further still

could you know how i wandered

for hours in your footsteps

wondering how to recreate your smile

out of dust and words

and the way my hands trembled

as i donned your heavy crown

of berries and twigs

i held all that was left of you in my hands

and imagined you were laughing beside me

shaking with joy as i kissed your wrists and lips

sometimes when i'm sleeping your hipbones still cut into me

and i open my mouth to moan your name

could you know how i waited

for your answer?

Knox gently pries the notebook from Charlie's freezing hands. He cups them in his own and presses kiss after kiss to them, hoping his breath can bring them back to tepid.

Todd remains shivering.

wearing your t-shirt, I'm queen of the night

one hand on the wheel, and one hand on my thigh

Charlie's left the window open. It's raining like there's an ocean in the sky, and Charlie's laughing. Todd's rocking back and forth on the bed, hands over his ears as he mutters to himself, thunder rumbling as lightning cracks and startles him. As Meeks and Pitts both reach over

to turn the music up, Charlie laughs even harder and grasps Knox's hand, pulling him into an unsteady dance.

"The sky's crying," he exclaims, voice nearing hysterical. "The sky's crying, Knoxious!"

Knox lifts a hand, brushing his thumb against Charlie's wet cheek. Charlie grins, cold fingers sneaking their way up under Knox's shirt.

"You're crying, Nuwanda," Knox whispers, as softly as he can. Charlie's grin falters until it topples into nothing. "We're all crying."

Charlie shrugs, slowing their jig to a sway. His hand stays clasped in Knox's.

"Well," he rasps, hollow. "Well, then the sky's crying with us."

and I know it sounds crazy, but babe I am too

I just can't turn my back to you

Todd wakes them up in a fit one night. He's turned all the lights on, the ones in the hallway too, and Meeks and Pitts are pressed up against each other in the corner, shaking. Knox blearily registers that he's in Charlie's bed again and wonders how that happened, but then figures it doesn't matter and climbs over Charlie to get to Todd, who's screaming.

"He's gone, Knox," he spits, gasping for breath. His fingers fist around Knox's sleeves and hold on for dear life. "He's gone, Knox, he fucking died, he fucking up and left us, he fucking *killed himself* -"

Knox pulls Todd into him and shoves Todd's mouth against his chest, trying to quiet him. The whole dorm's probably awake already, but they can't keep this up. They can't.

"Shh," he hisses, only half-noticing how Meeks and Pitts and Charlie have all moved closer, slowly wrapping themselves around Todd too. They're all murmuring, to Todd and to each other, things like "Breathe, for god's sake," and "We're sorry, we're so sorry," and "We miss him too, Todd. We know, we know, we know."

Knox wants to tell them all to shut up, to stop lying, because yeah,

they miss him, but not like Todd does, not struggling to breathe with their hearts buried in a fresh grave.

Pressing his hand against Todd's wound, against his chest, Knox leans over to Charlie, kissing his heart hard, saying nothing.

when the night goes quiet

and we're up in your room

"There's nothing we could've done," Knox says a few days later, not sure why, and Charlie stiffens against him, Todd sniffling and burying his nose deeper in his books.

That night, Pitts sneaks them some chocolate and Todd's journal, a few of its pages ripped out (which they find under Neil's pillow the next week, all their contents scribbled on the dorm room's wall).

"Neil" (#113)

cried with the sky

asked it to rain for you

why couldn't we dance like them?

we shoulda been braver

shoulda pulled each other closer

shoulda held on tighter, held on longer

i say nothing and they answer anyway

sorry

miss

love

BREATHE

i can't goddamn breathe

please wait in the wake of headlights in a thunderstorm,

seven roses in your hand

and keep my heart safe in their petals, your lips

the gates to heaven.

and you're kissing my fingers

and I kiss your tattoos

Charlie sneaks into town on Friday night and comes back on Sunday morning without making a single call home. Knox punches him hard in the nose as soon as he's through the door, kissing the blood off his lips not a moment later. He may've said he loves him, but he can't remember.

On Charlie's chest is a red thunderbolt in permanent ink, which Knox kisses until he can't breathe anymore. On Charlie's wrists, there's black letters and lines; on his left seven tally marks, on his right their names.

Charlie

Knox

Todd

Neil

Meeks

Pitts

Captain

“What the hell, Charlie?” Knox asks, Charlie’s mouth against his ear as he whispers things he thinks will make it okay. Their chests are warm pressed together, their fingers entwined on the bed. Charlie kisses the side of his head, grinning despite the way he winces as Knox’s nails dig into his hand.

“What the hell, Charlie?” He says again, and Charlie kisses him. Knox bites down on his lip, soliciting a whimper from Charlie, and flips them both over, so Charlie is the one trapped beneath him.

“What the hell, Charlie?” He murmurs one last time, out of breath and tearing up, and Charlie shrugs, craning his neck to press a feather-light kiss to Knox’s chest, right over his heart.

“I miss him, Knoxious,” he chokes out, and Knox squeezes his eyes shut, rocking back on his knees and running his fingers through Charlie’s hair when the boy wraps himself around him, blubbering all kinds of nonsense into his skin that Knox will wash off later.

I could lay in bed with you and talk shit forever, ever

if this is all a dream, wake me up never, never, never

“Why can’t we be normal?” Charlie asks him one night, tracing his fingers over Knox’s chest in the letters of his own name, and Knox shrugs while Meeks answers from Pitts’ arms, the two of them curled on the bed that’s supposed to be Knox’s but hasn’t been slept in for months.

“Cause we’re not supposed to be.”

Charlie snorts, because that’s the obvious answer, the low hanging fruit, and nods his head towards Todd with a grin, shouting, “Hey, Anderson!”

Todd looks up, a small smile gracing his lips, and for that Charlie smiles even wider.

“What do you think? Why aren’t we normal?”

Todd shrugs, turning back to his book. Knox notices his lips twitch as his smile threatens to fall, and the way he tries so desperately to keep it from doing so, probably wishing they’d worry less about him if he let it.

“Cause the gods decided that if everyone on earth was normal, then we wouldn’t live. We’d just survive until suddenly we didn’t.”

Charlie ponders this for a moment, his smile having shrunk to a ghost of his usual smirk.

“Carpe diem,” he whispers, and Knox follows without hesitation, the others soon after. He holds Charlie a little tighter, allowing himself to pretend for just a moment that they can be timeless, stuck together without fear of being torn apart.

swear to god, cross my heart, no one does it better, better

boy later, always gonna

Charlie wakes Knox up at two A.M. on Monday with a smirk and twinkling eyes to tell him Todd’s on the roof.

He is, drinking straight out of a red wine bottle and scribbling in his journal, Meeks and Pitts already beside him when Charlie and Knox climb up themselves. The radio’s playing something soft, something Neil would’ve liked, and Todd practically chucks the mostly empty bottle of wine at Charlie as soon as they’re settled, Charlie taking a long swig and passing it to Knox with a kiss on the cheek.

“What the fuck do people mean when they say I love you to the moon and back?” Todd asks, silent tears dripping down his face and onto his newly inked journal pages. “Like, how the fuck is that romantic? You’re saying your love has limits. You’ve given them a fucking measured amount, not all of it. How the fuck… how the fuck is that supposed to be romantic?”

Charlie shrugs as he hands the bottle to Pitts, who takes a small sip before letting Meeks have the rest, kissing it off his lips. Knox threads his fingers through Charlie’s, pressing a kiss to the back of his hand

and wondering how in all of Hellton, he ended up with the other unlucky queers.

“Dunno,” he answers, since no one else has. “But Neil loves you endlessly.”

Todd drops the bottle that had been oh-so-cautiously handed back to him. It shatters soundlessly on the ground, much like the look in Todd’s eyes. And then they’re all crying, trying to hold each other tight enough that none of them will ever leave again.

cause there’s something about it that brings me to life

I know all the consequences, I don’t mind

“Oh Captain, my Captain,” Knox answers the phone, Charlie sprawled lazily across their bed, smirking up at him in nothing but boxers. “To what do we owe the pleasure?”

He can hear the smile in Mr. Keating’s voice, as always, and relishes in the warmth that washes through him at the sound, reaching down for one of Charlie’s cold hands.

Charlie sits up and scoots closer to where Knox is standing by the desk, taking Knox’s hand in both of his and pressing a kiss to his knuckles. He mouths, *I love you,* and Knox looks away.

“We’ll see you in an hour, then,” he says, in way of goodbye, and pauses only a moment before adding, “we miss you, sir.”

The smile in Mr. Keating’s voice only grows wider.

“And I you, Mr. Overstreet.”

this holy redemption tears us in two

but I can’t turn my back to you

Todd collapses into Mr. Keating’s arms almost as soon as he’s close

enough, the professor's chest muffling his cries. Mr. Keating holds him fast, smiling at the boys over Todd's shoulder, and Knox risks a grasp of Charlie's fingers. Cold, as usual.

Mr. Keating hugs each and every one of them before requesting Todd take a stroll with him, alone. The others nod, unsure of what else they can do, and leave with a cautious glance over their shoulders, seeing that Todd's smiling slightly. The knot in Knox's chest loosens, though barely, and he lets Charlie take his hand, pretending it's not the only thing keeping him upright.

In Todd's room, they find a poem on Neil's pillow. Meeks and Pitts both tense up as soon as the first word leaves Knox's lips, clutching tight to each other's hands.

"Neil" (#145)

goodbye to the flowers,

to the cold and the snow,

to July and freedom,

to smiles and tears.

on familiar faces i hope to see

laughter and love

with the knowledge that we are alright now

alone in our own little world,

your memory beside us.

i asked your ghost one night for the truth,

hoping you would say you were happy.

instead you said nothing, and smiled, and i

promise

“hello, Neil,” i’ll say.

“i love you endlessly.”

And as Knox trails off, the last of Todd’s heartbreak fading from his voice, the ever laughing Charlie Dalton, the fearless Nuwanda, Knox’s joyous heart, breaks down in tears.

wearing your t-shirt, I’m queen of the night

one hand on the wheel, and one hand on my thigh

Todd’s room is bare and behind him as they wander down to the front door, where Mr. Keating waits with a briefcase and a melancholy smile.

Mr. Nolan watches on disapprovingly as they each hug Todd goodbye, mumbling confessions into his shoulders and neck, only the truth for once in their lives.

“We’ll miss you, buddy.”

“Good luck, Anderson.”

“Thanks for everything.”

Charlie holds him the longest, eyes shiny with tears as Todd shakes with laughter and sobs against him.

“We love you endlessly, Todd.”

Mr. Keating wraps an arm around Todd’s shoulders when Charlie finally lets go, and, with one last smile, turns to leave.

“Take care of each other,” Knox blurts, throat suddenly tight, and Mr. Keating nods. Todd offers a shaky smile.

“You too,” he says. The door slams behind them, and suddenly it’s warm again.

Knox thinks, almost desperately, that he misses the cold.

and I know it sounds crazy, but babe I am too

I just can’t turn my back to you

None of them sleep that night. Todd’s expulsion was a long time coming, and theirs is much the same. Charlie’s already on thin ice since punching Cameron (no regrets), so when Mr. Nolan loudly and publicly informs him he’ll be leaving that weekend, Charlie only flips him the bird and accepts it without complaint.

Meeks and Pitts soon follow, taking Mr. Nolan’s announcement as an invitation to jump up on the nearest lunch table and sing deafeningly (and off-key), ending the marvelous (-ly horrible) performance with a kiss, which has the entire cafeteria on its feet, roaring with doctrined disgust and unabashed laughter.

Knox decides then and there it’s his time to go too, dragging Charlie against him in a long, drawn-out kiss. Mr. Nolan tries to tear them apart, but Knox only holds on tighter, grinning as Mr. Nolan’s face turns the most pompous shade of purple he’s ever seen.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Nolan. But without girls at Welton, what else is there to do?”

Charlie laughs, a full and delighted sound, and Knox kisses him again, even as Mr. Nolan screams and screams and screams.

It feels, somehow, like the end is ending, and the sun is here again.

something about it that brings me to life

I know all the consequences, I don’t mind

They end up on Mr. Keating’s doorstep not a week later, bags in their

hands and smiles on their faces. He answers the door in a frilly pink apron, a grin spreading across his face as he shouts for Todd, who comes barrelling down the stairs and right into their arms, shouting with joy.

“You won’t believe it!” He yells, right in Knox’s ear. “You won’t believe it, it’s a miracle, it’s -”

“A goddamn fairytale,” Neil says, smiling as he comes up behind Todd and wraps an arm around his waist, kissing his cheek. He looks up at the others, whose jaws have all dropped, and grins. “Hello again.”

this holy redemption tears us in two

I can’t turn my back to you

Here is where Knox asks himself if he’s somehow died and gone to heaven.

Charlie’s the first to unfreeze, launching himself forward into Neil’s arms, peppering his face with kisses while he whispers things like “Fuck you,” and “I fucking missed you so fucking much.” Meeks is next, carefully curling himself against Neil’s chest and trembling as he starts to cry, Pitts joining the hug not a moment later, enveloping them both in his freakishly long arms. Knox is last, crashing into Neil and dragging Todd with him, the whole of them laughing and crying in each other’s arms, eventually all tumbling to the floor.

Mr. Keating watches with a smile from the kitchen doorway as the boys refamiliarize themselves with each other, touching one another’s faces and hands. They’re all laughing, grinning, never asking for an explanation. One will come, in time. Right now, the only important thing is that they’re happy.

The only important thing has always been that they’re together.

wearing your t-shirt, I’m queen of the night

one hand on the wheel, and one hand on my thigh

Mr. Keating has two extra bedrooms for children who never came to be. He clears out his study with their help, and they resume their lives, Knox and Charlie rooming together with a single bed, the same as Meeks and Pitts, and Neil and Todd. The house is loud, noisy, *alive* , and none of them cry so much anymore.

“How are you here?” Charlie asks one day, laying back against Knox’s chest, and Neil laughs from his and Todd’s bed, fingers tangled with Todd’s. Todd smiles at him adoringly, and Knox smiles to himself, happy they’re happy.

“Dad couldn’t get me to bend,” he shrugs. “Told me I was either gonna shape up or leave.”

He turns to Todd, smiling as Todd does and squeezing his hand. In the corner, Meeks and Pitts gag in unison.

“I left.”

Knox smiles and Charlie grins. Todd kisses Neil, eyes soft and shining, and Neil shakes with laughter against him. Pulling away, he rests his head on Todd’s shoulder, smiling around the room at the rest of them.

“He was convinced it was the Captain’s fault. Especially when he was the one I called to pick me up. He knew he would get fired, knew my father would blame him, but he didn’t know he’d tell everyone I was dead.”

He looks down at his lap, then up at Todd.

“Sorry about that, by the way,” he whispers. “I really am.”

Todd shakes his head, kissing him. Meeks and Pitts share a glance, and Knox tears up as Charlie answers, voice hoarse.

“You have nothing to apologize for,” he whispers, Neil’s eyes slowly raising to meet his. “None of us ever did.”

and I know it sounds crazy, but babe I am too

I just can’t turn my back to you

It ends with Charlie’s tongue in his mouth.

“Charlie, Charlie, Charlie,” he murmurs, like a prayer. “Charlie, Charlie, I love you.”

Charlie pulls away, lips red and glossy, his eyes shining with joy. Linking his fingers with Knox’s, pressing their foreheads together, he whispers, “Yeah?”

Knox grins, brushing their noses together and glancing down at Charlie’s mouth, kissing him again.

“Yeah,” he answers. “Endlessly.”

I just can’t turn my back to you

“The Dead Poets”

and in the light, the dying scream

i pull you ever closer.

and in our rooms, the lovelight gleams

you feel its warmth all over.

let the sun fade into night,

let the moon have waned in fright,

let the stars stay in our sight,

and in the dark, we’ll live.

End Notes

i hope you enjoyed it :)

thank you for reading!

have a wonderful day <3

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